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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,  
EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CENTCOM FOR CG CJTF-82, POLAD, JICCENT  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT LASHKAR GAH: GOVERNOR HOSTS JIRGA IN SANGIN

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SUMMARY  
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11. (SBU) Following the recent military operation to clear the Taliban from Sangin district, on April 12 a Government of Afghanistan (GOA) and ISAF delegation traveled from Lashkar Gah to Sangin to meet with a group of elders. Governor Wafa's delegation included the Police Chief, head of the Ulema Shura, and a member of the Provincial Council from Sangin. Wafa gave a prepared speech to the approximately 100 elders assembled, discussing improvements in security, inviting people to return to Sangin and assuring them that the GOA was committed to security and development in the district. He specifically mentioned the Kajaki energy and infrastructure project and the benefits it would bring the Province. The Task Force Helmand Commander spoke of ISAF's support for the Afghan National Army's efforts and reaffirmed that ISAF troops were here to support the GOA and pursue hardcore Taliban and foreign fighters. Some of the elders spoke with the Governor and the Chief of Police and offered a number of requests and complaints, the latter including accusations of looting by Afghan National Police. The jirga should be considered a success, as it brought together a significant number of local elders with Provincial Government officials to air concerns and look ahead. That success could result in a newly reinvigorated Wafa, whose outreach efforts towards tribal leaders had flagged in recent months. As a measure of stability and security returns to the district, the PRT will engage local leaders and provincial officials on the (re)introduction of the Afghan government and reconstruction to the district. END SUMMARY

Tribal Outreach Follows on Heels of Sangin Operation  
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12. (SBU) Following the recent military operation to clear the Taliban from Sangin district, located in northern Helmand, on April 12 a Government of Afghanistan (GOA) and ISAF delegation traveled from the provincial center of Lashkar Gah to Sangin to meet with a group of tribal leaders

and others from the district. Governor Wafa led the GOA delegation, which included his Chief of Police, the head of the Ulema Shura, and the Provincial Council (PC) member from Sangin. Representatives of Task Force Helmand (TFH) and the PRT included HTF Commander Brigadier Lorimer, the HTF Deputy Commander, the acting head of the PRT (civilian) and the USAID representative. Approximately 100 Sangin elders participated. (NOTE: Estimated attendance before the shura, from Afghans in Lashkar Gah, ran into the hundreds. Some locals in Sangin, informed of the shura before it occurred, expressed doubts that a sufficient number of influential elders would attend to make any decisions resulting meaningful. One hundred could be considered a significant turnout, especially considering how soon it took place after commencement of the operation and that there were troops in contact with anti-government forces roughly four kilometers away from the jirga site during the event. END NOTE)

13. (SBU) Wafa gave a prepared speech to the elders assembled, covering a variety of themes: expressed thanks to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and National Police (ANP) for their hard work; called for the need to stop foreign fighters; the district's residents are returning to Sangin; conveyed the importance of elders participating in district shuras; and requested Sangin residents to send 100 young men to be trained as ANP. He asked the shura what its priorities were for reconstruction and development and assured them that local contractors would participate in reconstruction. Wafa also spoke of the benefits of the Kajaki energy and infrastructure project for Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

14. (SBU) The PC member from Sangin told the elders that the international community was there to help Afghans, that the

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residents needed to "take their district back" and that Afghans must stop killing each other. (NOTE: It was not made clear from whom they should take the district back. END NOTE)  
The head of the Ulema Shura cited a passage from the Koran to support his assertion that Muslims and Christians can and should work together.

15. (SBU) Brigadier Lorimer spoke to the elders, explaining that ISAF wanted Sangin to be a better place and that stability led to development. He also spoke of ISAF's support for the Afghan security forces and reaffirmed that ISAF troops were there to support the GOA and pursue hardcore Taliban and foreign fighters and that once the Taliban were removed the district would be a safer and more prosperous place for the elders and their families.  
Tribal Leaders Respond  
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16. (SBU) A number of the elders spoke with the Governor and the Chief of Police -- sometimes quite passionately or angrily -- and offered a number of requests and complaints. One prominent local elder, pointing out that for 29 years there had been no GOA presence in Sangin, said that the district's residents were not happy with the Taliban and welcomed ISAF and GOA support. Those voicing complaints mostly pointed to looting by the ANP, though some requested that ISAF troops move out of the villages.

Shura Reinvigorates the Governor  
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17. (SBU) Governor Wafa was immensely pleased with the shura. The success of the event -- as he saw it -- may have reinvigorated the Governor, who, in a subsequent meeting with PRT representatives, spoke of other shuras he wished to hold. Specifically, in the near future Wafa plans a jirga in Nahri Sarraj, a district that is a focus of the PRT's development and reconstruction efforts and the site of the first construction camp related to the Kajaki project. Governor Wafa's message echoed those of President Karzai during his visit to Lashkar Gah on March 29 when the President met with

Wafa and 300 elders.

Comment

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18. (SBU) Wafa's enthusiasm for the jirga is both encouraging and justifiable. Not long after the operation commenced, and while ISAF and the GOA were still prosecuting it, GOA officials and ISAF representatives met in the district center with a significant number of local elders to speak frankly about problems and possibilities. As a measure of stability and security returns to the district, the PRT will engage local leaders and provincial officials on the (re)introduction of the Afghan government and reconstruction to the district.

WOOD